

**Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
Administration
M00A01**

Response to Recommended Actions

Recommendation:

Delete funds for departmental hospitality (\$4,384 GF)

Response:

The Department disagrees with the recommendation. This would completely eliminate funds that have been budgeted for many years for the Secretary to cover the cost of breakfast, lunch, dinner or refreshments at meetings with outside groups. The demand for meetings between the Secretary and outside groups continues to be very extensive. Nonetheless, the Department has reduced these costs in recent years from \$7,658 in FY01 to a FY05 budget of \$4,384, which is based on the average costs incurred for FY02-03.

Recommendation:

Delete funding for the two vacant deputy secretary positions (\$154,723 GF, \$58,760 FF)

Response:

The Department disagrees with the recommendation. While Secretary Sabatini has chosen to leave these positions unfilled during the past year, it is unreasonable to expect the largest agency in State government to operate indefinitely with only one Deputy Secretary and no Assistant Secretaries. Elimination of funding for these two positions penalizes the Department for cost containment efforts in FY 2004 and ignores the compelling need for these positions in the long term.

Recommendation:

Delete funding for two positions through achieving efficiencies in public and community relations (\$100,000 GF)

Response:

The Department disagrees with the recommendation. The Department offers the following information as justification.

1. Public Relations staff work on 150-200 media inquiries each month, generate 65 press releases a year, and respond to routine and emergency health-related issues on a 24-hour basis. This is accomplished with a staff of 6, two of which are federally funded. None of the 6 positions is vacant.
2. The Public Relations unit includes a graphics staff of 3 positions, one of which is federally funded. These positions produce brochures, exhibits and charts for many of the Department's units. None of the 3 positions are vacant.
3. The Office of Community Relations has 11 staff to handle issues such as: investigating complaints of discrimination in employment practices; monitoring equal access to services and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act; monitoring minority business participation in procurement activities; dissemination of information on health care issues affecting the minority community; and coordinating efforts on women's health. One of the 11 positions is vacant and the vacancy is being used to meet turnover expectancy.

Recommendation:

Delete funding for five positions through achieving efficiencies in personnel functions (\$250,000 GF)

Response:

The Department disagrees with the recommendation. There are five points the Department would offer in defense of the current staffing levels in Personnel.

1. The Secretary is committed to using existing vacancies in support functions to accommodate as many displaced Crownsville employees as possible. Reducing positions in this office will impact the Department's ability to offer positions to the Crownsville employees.
2. With the closure of Crownsville the demands for personnel services will be at a heightened level in FY05.
3. The Department has already reduced staffing in administrative units by 50 positions over the past two years, despite the fact that workload has not diminished. This is a reduction of 9%.
4. Comparing DHMH to other agencies, staffing in DHMH personnel functions is already very efficient and is at or below other comparable State agencies. It is important to note that DHMH Personnel Services provides services to 10,937 regular and 1,500 contractual employees. These services include employment testing for all DHMH units (formerly provided by DBM); timekeeping and payroll for 5,070 regular employees and 1,500 contractual employees (12 staff that are budgeted in the accounting office in most other agencies); employer relations for all DHMH units, including 18 facilities operating on a 24/7 basis; compensation studies for all DHMH units, including 20 local health departments using State positions; and employment services for 4,630 employees in DHMH.
5. There are currently three vacancies (2.5 FTE) in Personnel, and two vacancies are needed to meet turnover expectancy.

Recommendation:

Reduce funding for Patient Advocate Program (\$42,000 GF)

Response:

The Department agrees with the recommendation.